

## The Catholic Church and Art

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THE art about which there is question tonight deals with that group of human activities which, although they have not been brought into play by actual necessity, have nevertheless been practised by man for pleasure or amusement, from time immemorial. These activities are known as the fine, or beautiful arts, because primarily they have had their origin in man's love of the grand and beautiful. They comprise the five greater arts of architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and poetry, with a number of lesser arts subsidiary to them. It will be my endeavor to set before you a faint idea of what modern culture owes to the Catholic Church for her constant encouragement and generous patronage of these great expressions of the human faculty. This debt is, nowadays, readily admitted by all who know something of the history of art. For instance, John Fiske, with all his love for classicism, feels compelled to say:

It is hard to find words fit to express the debt of gratitude which modern civilization owes to the Roman Catholic Church. When we think of all the work, big with the promise of the future, that went on, in those centuries which modern writers in their ignorance used once to set apart and stigmatize as the "Dark Ages"; when we consider how the seeds of what is noblest in modern life were then painfully sown, upon the soil which Imperial Rome had prepared; when we think of the various works of a Gregory, a Benedict, a Boniface, an Alfred, a Charlemagne, we feel that there is a sense in which the most brilliant achievements of pagan antiquity are dwarfed in comparison with these.

### ARTS SUBORDINATE POSITION

Before proceeding further, it is well for us to glance at another side of the question. The Church was founded by Christ to teach men the way to Heaven, and so her one great work is the salvation of souls. In this sense, it is quite true that she makes little of culture, and looks upon it as mere dust in the balance, weighed against a virtuous life; as something to be cultivated with due precaution lest it bring forth the bitter fruits of false doctrine

and intellectual pride. Thus at the very beginning of the Church's existence, the most intellectual of the Apostles, St. Paul, constantly warns us against intellectualism, bidding us not to be wise above measure, but to embrace the folly of the Cross, instead of the wisdom of this world, which, before God, is foolishness. And whereas, he says, worldly science and art puffeth up, it is the mission of Christianity to bring every intelligence as a captive to Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of true wisdom and science. This warning has been re-echoed down through all the centuries in the teaching of the Church, and in our own times by Leo XIII, who says:

The labors of the Church have not had for their purpose to spread abroad knowledge, or cultivate reason but to avert sin and to save the souls of men compared with which the value of the whole world is but dust and ashes. For it is not things of time that she places first, but things of eternity; and literature, science and art are things of time. The Church, therefore, far from considering art and splendor necessary in Divine worship, has always been ready to set them aside when need be; she has sold the very vessels of the sanctuary for the redemption of captives, and the sustentation of the poor; she has, for fear of the persecutor, celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the highest form of worship, in cellars, and caverns, on wind-swept heaths, or frozen wastes; and administered the Sacraments amid the horrors of the brutal battlefield, or the squalor of a sordid city slum. Thus she bids the fine arts no less than science and literature, to keep their place, to maintain their subordinate position, for they are but part of a mighty system, for she knows that, whatever of good there is in them comes from above, so that for all their fairness, they became imposture and corruption, when made to minister to pride and sensuality. And she would much rather a crowded and devout congregation in a church constructed and adorned in violation of every rule of art, than a few cold worshipers in a faultless building amid masterpieces of adornment; for it is better having only one eye to enter into the kingdom of heaven than with two eyes to be thrown out into exterior darkness.

All this is very true; and the enemies of the Church have made the most of it. The note of ignorance, and want of culture, was an early reproach leveled at the religion of Christ, by the cultured pagans of the first few centuries.

Yet, paradoxical as it may seem, throughout the Church's history, art has ever found in her a tender foster-mother and generous patroness. Many artistic souls during the centuries have found a refuge in her cloisters, where they could follow their art without any thought of the necessities of the morrow, and obtain leisure and inspiration for beautiful work, without disturbance and interruption from the world outside. For nothing so enables a man to get the best out of this life, as the thought, so insistently inculcated by the Church, that this is only a preparation for another life. Nothing so lifts a man above himself, into the highest expression of all that is beautiful in his soul, as the thought that he is not of the earth, earthly, but that he is made for higher things; and that, somehow, the spirit in him that aspires after higher things, can by religious feeling find a suitable and extremely satisfying expression of itself through its material veils, as a foretaste of the freedom of the spirit world that is to come.

#### NATURE AND ART POINT HEAVENWARD

If we take, therefore, those forms of expression of the human intellect, achievement in which is considered to mark great advance on the part of humanity—architecture, sculpture, painting and music—we shall find that the Church has been the most important factor in their development, practically during the whole of her existence. Apart from the classical, all architecture from the Christian Roman, through the Byzantine and the Romanesque, and the Gothic and the Renaissance phases, was developed under her inspiration. The twin arts of sculpture and painting reached the height of perfection, almost in the same way, under her auspices; whilst modern music was all brought into being under her fostering care. Thus the Gregorian chant, sublime in its simple effectiveness, as a mode of musical expression, is her special instrument; part singing was invented for her ceremonials; the Mass was the inspiration for oratorio, and that in turn, for opera, and most of the great musicians have been glad to lay the tribute of their genius at the foot of the altar. Thus, it is not too much to say that everywhere, and at all times, the spirit of Christianity has been productive of

fruits that have brought out the best that is in man's spirit, and lifted him far above himself. And why should it be otherwise? Is not the earth "the Lord's, and the fullness thereof? Are not the gifts of intellect His gifts? Is not their purpose His glory? Is not imagination the gift of the Author of nature, and is not the Author of nature the Author of the Church? And so the Christian Church gradually adopted whatever was beautiful or seemly in pagan worship, provided it was not inseparably connected with falsehood and sensuality, for it did not appear right to her that the enemies of the One True God should be left the monopoly of seemly worship, and the choice gifts of the Most High be used only to His dishonor. She therefore consecrated every kind of religious symbolism to the service of truth, and thus reasonably satisfied the craving of man's natural emotions. She knew full well that of all that is grand and beautiful, God is the archetype and origin; that to those who have spiritual eyes to see and ears to hear, the beauty of nature and art point heavenward; and through the medium of created form and color, we can gain some glimpse of uncreated beauty. . . .

#### ART IN THE CATACOMBS.

The artistic setting of the apocalypse shows us that, even in the beginning, the Church made use of the arts to raise men's thoughts to Heaven. Even during the centuries of persecution, when she was compelled to burrow underground in the Catacombs—the Christian burial places of Rome—she has left many indications of this use of the fine arts in the service of the Almighty. Excavations in later years have brought to light many paintings of the first and second centuries equal to the wall paintings of the best period of the Empire.

It may be asked, says De Rossi, the great authority on the Catacombs, whether it is credible that the faithful in the age of the Apostles or of their disciples, when the Church fresh from the bosom of the image-hating synagogue, was in deadly conflict with idolatry, should have so promptly and so generally adopted, and (so to speak) baptized the fine arts.

And he answers that so grave a question deserves to be discussed in a special treatise; but that for the present he will only say:

The universality of the pictures in the subterranean cemeteries, and the richness, the variety, the freedom of the most ancient types when contrasted with the cycle of pictures which I clearly see become stiffer in manner and poorer in conception towards the end of the third century; these things prove the impossibility of accepting the hypothesis of those who affirm the use of pictures to have been introduced little by little, on the sly as it were, and in opposition to the practise of the primitive Church.

In these underground cemeteries, the Christians used to assemble for the celebration of Mass in time of persecution, and hence they adorned them, to the best of their ability, with paintings and sculptures. The paintings are subject to one drawback, inasmuch as, being designed to remain underground and therefore to be seen always by artificial light, they have usually been roughly drawn and irregularly colored, and so they afford little insight into the actual state of the art of painting when they were produced.

#### • FLOWERING OF ART IN LIBERATED CHURCH.

Yet, in spite of this, Christian thought and feeling find worthy expression in the common language of art. There are many representations of Christ as the Good Shepherd, and of the Apostles in pastoral scenes and of Our Lady. The well-executed picture of the Blessed Virgin with the Infant Jesus, in the Cemetery of Priscilla, belongs to the fourth century. In the Cemetery of St. Callistus we have a portrait of Christ of the same period. Owing to the perishable character of their productions, very few works of the Christian painters of the later Roman Empire—though they were many—have come down to us. By the edict of Constantine, in 313, Christianity was recognized as the official religion of the Empire. The Church left her hiding places and a profound transformation of religious painting was the result of this triumph. The time had come to display the insignia of Christ's victory with the same material splendor which the State attached to the imperial majesty of Caesar. The Good Shepherd of the Catacombs and the pastoral scenes gradually disappear, and Christ is portrayed as a celestial Emperor invested with awe-inspiring glory, as on the porch of the ancient Vatican. The paintings become chiefly narrative and historical in character; for the Church, having overcome paganism, was faced with the

task of supplying its place and she quickly recognized in her own experience with paganism the efficacy of images as a means of instruction; and so, replacing the vast repertory of pagan myths and legends, she created for the imagination a new basis likewise derived from the past, but founded on Divine Revelation. Many poetical inscriptions have come down to us from this period describing pictures long since perished, to which they were once attached. One such must have been attached to a picture of the Mother of God with the Divine Infant at her breast. The author, a certain Andrew the Orator, extols the glorious privileges of both Mother and Child, saying of the latter, that He was twice begotten—as Creator without a mother, and as a Redeemer without a father.

#### EARLY CHRISTIAN BASILICAS.

There are no monuments of early Christian art in Rome better able to aid us in forming an opinion upon the efforts of Christian sculptors than the sarcophagi or stone coffins. The bas-reliefs on these are distinguished by originality, deep spiritual insight, and great technical skill, and are well able to hold their own with the best contemporary productions of profane art. The very best of them are to be found in the Lateran Museum where the archaeologist Marchi, by the command of Pope Pius IX., gathered together all the most beautiful that Rome possessed. One of these was found in the sixteenth century beneath old St. Peter's, and is peculiarly significant as it represents Christ conferring power upon St. Peter. Sculpture in wood was also enlisted in the service of the Church as is proved by the doors of the basilica of St. Sabina. Sculpture in ivory achieved great importance in the ninth and tenth centuries, and flourished especially in France.

#### EXQUISITE ILLUSTRATING BY IRISH MONKS.

The art of illustrating books was also common at this period, and there is preserved in the Vatican a strip of parchment thirty-three feet in length containing the Book of Josue illustrated with miniatures. In the art of illuminating MSS., the Irish monks attained the highest degree of perfection. Indeed, up to the end of the eighth

century the sole original school of illumination is to be sought in the Irish monasteries or in those founded on the Continent by Irish monks. The works of the Irish school are characterized by wonderful decorative sense, far removed from naturalism. Nothing is more graceful than the large initials formed by ribbons ornamented with interlacings in the midst of which are sometimes human heads and figures of animals. "Ireland," says the great authority Westwood," may be justly proud of her Book of Kells, for it is unquestionably the most elaborately executed MS. in existence." To this period, too, belong the magnificent work in enamels, executed for Church requisites, in which also the Irish excelled all others. The Ardagh Chalice, for instance, of translucent enamels on silver and gold, is only one of a group of Irish shrines, reliquaries, croziers and crosses, similarly decorated, and it would appear likely that they are amongst the earliest examples of the art in connection with Church possessions. Of the Ardagh Chalice, it has been well said by an eminent critic that it combined classic beauty of form with the most exquisite examples of almost every variety of Celtic ornamentation. The Cross of Cong, a replica of which was sent out a few years ago to the Archbishop of Melbourne, is also another fine specimen of this beautiful art.

#### THE GOTHIC CATHEDRALS.

The most significant chapter in the book of the arts of the later Middle Ages is to be found in the great Gothic Cathedrals. I am not going to deal with the gradual development of Gothic out of the older Romanesque, nor with the Byzantine elements that may have helped this evolution. It is sufficient for our purpose that the Church of this period took the Gothic ideas in architecture and applied them so marvelously that thereafter it could be felt that no problem of structural work had been left unsolved, and no feature of ornament or decoration left untried. The great centre of Gothic influence was the north of France, but it soon spread to most of the countries of Western Europe. In England, owing to the Norman Conquest, it developed almost as rapidly and with as much beauty and effectiveness as in its mother country. It has been well said that Gothic art and architecture

are the aesthetic expression of that period of European history when paganism had been extinguished, the traditions of classical civilization destroyed, the hordes of barbarian invaders driven back or assimilated, and the Catholic Church had established herself not only as the sole spiritual power, supreme and almost unquestioned in authority, but also as the arbiter of the destinies of sovereigns and peoples. We can say, therefore, that the civilization of the Middle Ages was what the Church, organized and invincible, had made it, and, therefore, for the unmeaning term "Gothic art," "Catholic art" should really be substituted.

#### MODELS OF ARCHITECTURE.

It is to the Benedictine monks of the earlier Middle Ages, especially of the Cluny Reform in the eleventh century, that we owe most of this progress in the arts. Their monasteries were models of architecture as distinguished as the great cathedrals, and were really hives of industry. Those of England and Ireland were, of course, despoiled during the Reformation period, and have come down to us only in ruins. The monasteries of Catholic countries which escaped for the most part this dire calamity remain splendid examples of the combination of the useful and the beautiful so characteristic of medieval art. One feature of these monastic houses deserves special mention. The cloisters were constructed so beautifully as to make them veritable gems of the art of the period. Of these, perhaps those of St. John Lateran, and of St. Paul's Outside the Walls of Rome, constructed during the thirteenth century, are the finest specimens. The studied variety of their columns, so that no two are exactly alike, far from producing a bizarre effect, only adds further charm to the picturesqueness of their ensemble.

#### THE MEDIEVAL ARTIST.

According to Havelock Ellis, no type of architecture so admirably embodies the romantic spirit as Spanish Gothic. For this we must go especially to Toledo and Burgos, where we find all the elements of stupendous size, of mysterious gloom, of grotesque yet realistic energy which are the characters alike of Spanish architecture and medieval romance. As a matter of fact, we



are too apt to think of all these great Gothic structures as mere manifestations of the power of man to overcome great engineering difficulties and to solve great structural problems, rather than as representing opportunities for the expression of what was most beautiful and poetic in the minds of the people of those times. Yet this was what they were in reality, and their architects were really poets, creators of "frozen dreams" or of sermons in stone, as these cathedrals have been so well styled, with their spires with magnificent gesture pointing the way to heaven. It has been well said, too, that the medieval workman was a lively symbol of the Creator Himself in the way in which he did his work. It mattered not how obscure the portion of the cathedral at which he was set, he decorated it as beautifully as he knew how, without a thought that it might never or seldom be viewed by human eye, for he did it for God, whose eye nothing escapes. And this is true of every detail of construction and decoration.

It is sometimes considered that the Middle Ages produced nothing of importance in the way of sculpture, yet there is probably no finer or more charming presentation of the human form divine, in stone, than the figure of Christ above the main door of the Cathedral of Amiens, so well known to our Australian soldiers in France, and which the people of that city call so lovingly their "Beautiful God." There are other statues in that same cathedral that are also wonderful specimens of the sculptor's art, but it was in Rheims that sculpture reached its acme of perfection during this period, and sculptors have been unstinted in their praise of this feature in that celebrated cathedral.

#### RELIGIOUS ORDERS SPONSOR ARTS.

In the beginning of the thirteenth century there arose two great Church institutions that were destined to exercise great influence on the age. Both the Dominican and Franciscan Orders, from their birth, showed themselves not only ready but anxious to employ the arts as a means of religious education and the encouragement of piety. Their action in this matter had an enormous influence on art and especially on the painters and sculptors of the time. The Franciscans especially asked for

loving, familiar scenes, such as would touch the hearts of the common people—St. Francis was the originator of the Crib—and both Orders aided greatly in helping the artist to break away from the old-fashioned Byzantine formalism, which was quite insufficient to satisfy the new ardor of men's souls. It was the love of St. Francis for all living creatures, even the lowliest, with the tenderest feeling for every aspect of external nature, which appealed to the painters as a veritable light in the darkness of the time, and it was especially in the churches founded by the disciples of the "Little Poor man of Assisi," as he delighted to call himself, that the world saw burst forth the first grand flowers of that renewal of art called the Renaissance, which was to reach its height in the next two centuries.

#### GREAT ITALIAN PAINTERS AND SCULPTORS.

The most important phase of Italian art in the thirteenth century, began at Florence, with Cimabue, who began painting long before the middle of the century. He was undoubtedly a great original genius, and his famous Madonna, which was subsequently borne in triumph from his studio to the Church of Santa Maria Novella, placed the seal of popular approval on the new art. It has been said of late that it was not Cimabue, but Duccio, to whom this honor belongs, and that it took place in Venice. After Cimabue, the next important name is Giotto. He was greater even than his predecessor, and was the friend of Dante, the greatest of poets, whose portrait by Giotto has come down to us. Giotto's work is still considered worthy of study by artists because of certain qualities in which it has never been surpassed. His wonderful precocity may be seen from the fact that at the age of twenty he was given the task of finishing the decorations of the Upper Church of Assisi, and in doing so he broke so completely with the Byzantine formalism of the preceding millennium that he must be considered as the liberator of art and its deliverer from the chains of conventionalism into the freedom of nature. Beautiful as are the pictures of the Upper Church, however, ten years after their completion Giotto's genius can be seen to have taken a still higher flight, by the study of the

pictures on the vast ceilings of the Lower Church, which to be appreciated must be seen and studied on the spot. No greater tribute to the times in which he lived could possibly be given than to say that his genius was recognized at once, and he was sought after by Popes, kings, republics, and princes, convents and municipalities, who competed with one another to have this great artist paint for them. This great double church to which I have referred, and which Christendom had erected over the sepulcher of St. Francis, was the work of a Franciscan friar, Fillipo of Campbello, who began the Lower Church in 1228, two years after the death of the Saint, and finished the Upper in 1239.

#### GIOTTO AND FRA ANGELICO

The personality of Giotto overshadows the art of the whole of the fourteenth century, and the study of his followers' works only serves to show the surpassing glory of his genius. Towards the end of the century, we have the great artist, Fra Angelico, the Dominican. All the mystic thought of the medieval world, the passionate love of God and man that beat in the heart of St. Francis, the yearnings of Dante's soul after a higher and more perfect order, the poetic dreams of the monks who sang of the celestial country, are embodied in the art of Angelico. The depth and sincerity of his own religious feeling lent wings to his imagination and the exquisite purity of his soul breathes in every line of his painting.

#### EVER-FAMOUS WORKS.

There were a number of great painters in Italy during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, such as Masaccio, the two Lippi, Sandro Botticelli, Ghirlandajo, and Perugino, who were types of their contemporaries and received generous patronage from the Church. In Flanders art also made great headway. The new development of Flemish painting in which the individual character of the artist becomes strongly marked, begins with the brothers Van Eyck. They opened their eyes completely to nature and mastered the means to represent what they saw. They are considered to have been the inventors of oil painting, and they certainly made wonderful advances in the use

of that material. Many charming Madonnas were painted by them, one of which was purchased a couple of years ago for over £31,000, and is now in the Melbourne Art Gallery.

In 1452 was born Leonardo da Vinci, who was certainly one of the most gifted mortals that ever lived. His personal beauty and heroic strength, his brilliant conversation and fascinating presence that charmed all hearts, were only the outward sign of a marvelously subtle and refined intellect, and of a mental energy that has been seldom equalled. There was hardly a branch of learning that he did not seek to explore. Painting was only one of the many forms in which his activity was displayed, yet he exercised the most extraordinary influence on contemporary artists, and was the true founder of the Italian school of oil-painting. His most famous work is the fresco of The Last Supper, in the refectory of the Dominican Friars in Milan. He died in 1519.

#### RAPHAEL AND MICHELANGELO.

The Vatican, the Pope's Palace in Rome, is a veritable storehouse of art, and redounds to the undying fame of two great artists, Raphael Sanzio and Michelangelo Buonarroti, as well as of the Popes whose generous patronage made their masterpieces possible. Raphael, the greatest painter of the renaissance, and, in fact, of all time, was born in 1483, and died in 1520, only thirty-seven. He found his great patron in Pope Julius II, who, by his energy and love of art, made Rome once more the capital of the civilized world, and the center of all that was great in art and literature. It seems almost incredible for the immense range of work at the Vatican by no means represents the whole of Raphael's activity during his twelve years in Rome, yet he also painted upwards of forty Madonnas, and many portraits and pictures. We are all familiar with copies of his Sistine Madonna, and the Madonna della Sedia, as well as his great picture of the Transfiguration in the Vatican.

The last great Florentine master of the renaissance was Michelangelo, whose mighty personality towers like some Titan of old over all his great contemporaries of the sixteenth century. Born in 1475, he lived to the age of ninety, dying in 1564. His works represent the culmi-

nating point of the Italian Renaissance. In them the problems of form and movement which had occupied the masters since the days of Giotto, find their highest development. "God," Michelangelo says in one of his sonnets, "has nowhere revealed Himself more fully than in the sublime beauty of the human form." This was the keynote of all his work. Like Leonardo, Michelangelo was a many-sided genius, and three supreme conceptions—the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel, the statue of Moses for the tomb of Julius II, and the dome of St. Peter's—remain to prove his skill as painter, sculptor and architect. But, above all, as he himself proclaimed, he was the sculptor. In 1505, he was called to Rome by Julius II, and he spent the rest of his long life in the service of successive Pontiffs. The Pope first set him to work on a colossal monument for his tomb, and a magnificent design was drawn up, but never finished. Yet his Moses intended to be part of this tomb is one of the grandest figures ever conceived. Another great piece of sculpture by him is the *Pieta*, the most celebrated work of his early life. In 1508, the Pope ordered him to leave his sculpture for the time being and to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Very reluctantly he complied, and the result (in 1512) was the grandest achievement of his art. Whether we regard the artistic beauty and grandeur of the decoration or the intellectual conception of the scheme the work is alike marvelous. The whole story of the Creation, the Fall and the Deluge, is set forth in the nine large compartments of the central vault, whilst all the other spaces are filled with similarly beautiful representations. We cannot be too grateful to the Pope for affording him this opportunity to exhibit such talent. Thirty years later, at the request of Pope Paul III, he executed his other great painting of the Last Judgment, on the wall above the altar of the Sistine Chapel. In 1547, the Pope appointed him architect of St. Peter's, and he held this office under the five succeeding Pontiffs till his death in 1564. As one approaches Rome the first thing that catches the eye is the majestic dome of St. Peter's which stands out against the sky above all the towers, obelisks and other domes well meriting the encomium of Byron:

And, lo, the dome—the vast and wondrous dome,  
 To which Diana's marvel was a cell—  
 Christ's mighty shrine above His martyr's tomb.

#### A GALLERY OF GENIUSES.

This dome covers the tomb of St. Peter, erected near the site of his martyrdom. As the old basilica of St. Peter had long fallen into decay, Pope Julian II set the architect Bramante to draw up plans for a new Cathedral, and its cornerstone was laid in 1506, but nine years after Bramante died, and very little was done till the appointment of Michelangelo, who labored at it for eighteen years, and had the satisfaction of seeing his superb dome almost completed. The building itself was not finished till well into the seventeenth century, and in spite of changes for the worse from the original plan still remains the vastest and grandest temple ever made by the hands of man. As Byron has so well apostrophized it:

But thou, of temples old or altars new  
 Standest alone—with nothing like to thee—  
 Worthiest of God, the holy and the true.  
 Since Sion's desolation, when that He  
 Forsook His former city, what could be  
 Of earthly structures in His honor piled,  
 Of a sublimer aspect? Majesty,  
 Power, Glory, Strength and Beauty, all are aisled  
 In this eternal ark of worship undefiled.

Of the numbers of other great painters and sculptors from the fifteenth century to our times, I need only mention such men as Domenichino, Andrea del Sarto, Fra Bartolommeo, Giulio Romano, Cerregio, Bellini, Titan, Tintoretto, Sansovino, Giudo Reni, Carlo Dolci, Velasquez, and Murillo, Rubens and Van Dyck, Canova and Millet, whose famous picture of The Angelus is so well known. All these great artists and many others show by their masterpieces the inspiration and abiding effect upon them of their Catholic Faith.

#### THE POPES AS PATRONS OF MUSIC.

I do not intend to treat of poetry, which comes under the head of literature, and little time remains for music, so a short summary must suffice of the great debt that this art owes to the Church. Though the primitive Church was by the force of circumstances much restrained in its religious manifestations, it, nevertheless, as history

shows, never lost sight of the importance of singing in Divine worship. Tertullian relates that in the celebrations of the Christian Mysteries, the Psalms were sung, and even the pagan, Pliny, had ascertained that the Christians honored their God before dawn by singing a hymn. St. Ambrose introduced into Milan, with great success, towards the close of the fourth century, antiphonal singing of the Psalms, "after the manner of the East," and St. Augustine wrote a hymn to be sung by the people. In the fifth century, antiphonal singing was adopted for the Mass, which had hitherto included only responsorial. By this time all the types of the choral chants had been established, and thenceforward there was a continual development that reached something like finality in the time of St. Gregory the Great. This Pope was a great music-lover, and made a final arrangement of all the Roman chant, and the authority of his name as well as the intrinsic value of the work itself, caused it to be adopted gradually by practically the whole of the Western Church, and to become known as the Gregorian Chant. In Carolingian times, the organ first came into use, and we read how Gerbert, who became Pope Sylvester II, at the close of the tenth century, made several of these primitive instruments. Perfected organ-playing found ever-increasing favor with the Church authorities, for the nature of the organ is a protection against its misuse, whilst its power and fullness lend themselves admirably to the majesty of Divine service. In the eleventh century, Guido d'Arrezzo made great advance in the theory of music, and his celebrated chorister's hymn, which taught the gamut to youthful singers by embodying in the text what were subsequently known as the Tonic Sol-fa syllables, proves that the education of musical children, with a view to their admission to Church choirs, had attracted the attention of one of the most noted theorists of the day. By this time, aided by the progress of musical notation, music had reached the stage of "descant," from which the whole art of counterpoint was evolved. Early polyphonic problems gave rise to a considerable literature about this time, the principal writings on the subject being by monks.

## PALESTRINA AND GREGORIAN CHANT.

Side by side with the music of the Church, the early centuries of the Christian era saw the growth of the folk-songs, a species of music which seems to have sprung from the people themselves and to have been disseminated widely, especially among the Celtic peoples, by means of the musical performances of their bards and minstrels, and later on in France and Germany by the troubadours and minne-singers. Gradually a curious amalgamation of secular with sacred elements took place when, about the fifteenth century, we find the early Flemish composers adapting popular folk-songs as the fundamental themes of their motets and Masses. The Council of Trent strongly condemned this abuse, and it was even contemplated banishing all music, except Gregorian, from the liturgical offices. At this crucial point a young creative artist came forward and offered to compose a Mass that would completely satisfy the ecclesiastical authorities, both in the manner of devoutness and musicianship. This champion of figured music was John, surnamed Palestrina, from the town where he was born in 1514. The result was the famous Mass of Pope Marcellus, which so delighted the reigning Pope, Pius IV, that he exclaimed: "John gives us here in this earthly Jerusalem a foretaste of that new song which the holy Apostle John realized in the heavenly Jerusalem in his prophetic trance." Not only Church dignitaries, but all the eminent musicians of modern times have been deeply impressed with the nobility, devotion and solemnity of Palestrina's sacred music. Under the spell of this music as rendered by the Sistine Choir, one is filled with the spirit of worship and reverence. A couple of years ago Melbourne had an opportunity of hearing this heavenly music when members of the Sistine Choir were here under Mgr. Rella. Those who heard them can well understand the exclamation of the composer Paer on a similar occasion:

"This is indeed divine music, such as I have long sought for, and my imagination has never been able to realize, but which I knew must exist."

All his life Palestrina was imbued with a great admiration for the serene grandeur of the Gregorian Chant. In this he was not alone, for great composers like Halevy,



Mozart and Berlioz join with him in its praise. Halevy considers the chant "as the most beautiful religious melody that exists on earth," and Mozart's statement is well known: that he would gladly exchange all his music for the fame of having composed the Gregorian Preface in the Mass; whilst Berlioz declared that nothing in music could be compared to the effect of the Gregorian "Dies Irae" in the Mass for the Dead. As Gervaeert says, the fundamental characteristic of the chant is that it never grows stale, as if time had no power over it, which shows that not the most conspicuous but the most simple artistic means, when skilfully employed, produce the deepest and most lasting impression.

#### OTHER GREAT COMPOSERS.

After Palestrina, other great composers as Vittoria, produced Masses in keeping with liturgical requirements, but gradually abuses crept in and the greatest composers of modern times, Catholics though they were—Mozart, Hadyn and Beethoven, and others—devoted their talents principally to secular purposes, and when they did turn to Church music their works were all tainted with this secular atmosphere. The twisting of the liturgical words to suit the music, and its operatic form, render their Masses little suited to the requirements of the Church, though as works of art suited for the concert platform they are worthy of all praise, for we must carefully distinguish between religious music—be it ever so beautiful, artistic and conducive to private devotion—and that kind of music the Church requires for her services. This has been made clear for us by the *Motu Proprio* of Pope Pius X, in 1903.

#### THE CHURCH'S DISINTERESTED MOTIVES.

In this, as in all her regulations in regard to art, the Church has acted as a wise and prudent mother. She has ever been guided in her use of the fine arts by the disinterested motive of the greater glory of God. And it is this motive that she places before her children who are desirous of devoting themselves to an artistic career. This is what animated them in the ages of faith and produced so many glorious works and monuments to the honor of the Most High and the perpetual delight of mankind.

## "Medieval" an Abusive Term

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**M**R. CHESTERTON has noted how lightly shallow critics brush aside schemes which they do not like as "medieval." That epithet at once marks them as quite unsuitable for people who know all about wireless, and practise surfing. At the same time Mr. Chesterton is watching with interest the picturesque English Ku Kluxers, who call themselves Crusaders, and is tickled to hear that a London society is being formed of persons claiming descent from the Plantagenets who flourished in England seven centuries ago.

"It seems to me much more curious," he adds, "that nobody notices how very much more of the Middle Ages there is in the Labor Party than in a club confined to Plantagenets. The only man I know of who was proud of being descended from Plantagenets was Sir William Harcourt. And I suppose if you searched the universe for a man who was the flat contrary and very reverse of medieval, you could not have found a more absolute antithesis than that jolly old Erastian Whig aristocrat, Sir William Harcourt."

He then goes on to say: "I think I shall keep a scrap-book of cuttings recording the extraordinary modern use of the word 'medieval.' It is nearly always used as a term of abuse; but I do not object to that. What I object to is that it is nearly always used of the particular abuses that were not medieval. In an article in the *Nation*, during the war, I saw it applied to Prussian militarism, actually to distinguish it from the comparative moderation of the "*Centrum*"; though Prussia did not even exist in medieval times and; if there were any medieval party, one would suppose it was the Catholic party. I read recently in a newspaper a phrase about medieval idea that chastity was expected of women, but not of men. If there ever was a time when it really might have been equally demanded of both, it was the medieval time.

"A barrister in a cause celebre the other day talked about 'medieval casuistry'; doubtless invented by the medieval Jesuits, denounced by the medieval Pascal, not

to mention the medieval Voltaire. I have heard people call the whole idea of nationalism medieval. I for one happen to believe in nationalism, and I happen to admire medievalism. So I know a little too much about both of them to imagine that they had anything to do with each other, or even existed at the same time. I have even heard people refer to the medieval conditions of capitalism; as also doubtless to the medieval Zeppelin and the medieval mustard gas, to the medieval submarine menace and to the influence of the medieval cinema on juvenile crime. It is clear that some long and more or less unintelligible word is needed to express the deep feelings of human nature about a vast number of incongruous and incompatible things; I would suggest that the word 'Mesopotamian' is even longer than 'medieval,' and could be used with the same universal fitness and effect.

"And meanwhile, the things that really are medieval do not even know that they are medieval. Nay, the things that really are medieval would probably boast of not being medieval. For instance, the idea of workmen banding themselves together, and refusing certain advantages individually in order to gain them collectively, is a thoroughly medieval idea. It was the first and fundamental conception of the medieval guilds, which grew up with medieval civilization, and perished with medieval civilization. It was only the death of medievalism that was the birth of modern individualism; the rise of the individual outbidding or undercutting his fellow; the individual called by some the Industrious Apprentice and by others the Blackleg.

"Curiously enough, perhaps, such popular movements have kept some traces even of more picturesque traditions. The picturesque trappings, like those adopted by the modern 'Crusaders' have always been used by humbler bodies. The friendly societies marched with banners and colored scarves through the whole dingy inferno of the industrial epoch. While Cabinet Ministers and captains of industry were walking about in black like mutes at a funeral, with chimney-pot hats modeled on their own smoky chimneys, the Foresters still carried on festive days the colored rags that were

the remains of Merry England. Elsewhere, I fancy there is a festive brotherhood known as the Elks.

"Surely the very name of the Foresters might be called medieval; I suppose the name of the Elks would be considered almost prehistoric. I fear that the historian must hesitate before maintaining that the Foresters were actually founded by Robin Hood; or that the Elks were inaugurated in that ancient cavern, where prehistoric man (that miserable and much-despised character) proved himself capable of drawing elks or reindeers a great deal better than most of us could draw them now.

"These are the things that nearly disappeared at the midnight of materialistic industrialism; and, whether we like it or not, their slow revival has meant the return of medievalism. The very men who use medievalism as a term of abuse use medieval things as things of use, as the only things that a man of taste and intelligence can use. We should still be imprisoned in Victorian plush and mahogany if Morris had not appealed to the Middle Ages; we should still be bludgeoning each other in blind individualism if the Guilds had not appealed to the Middle Ages. This is none the less the fact, though in the former case the medieval triumph is forgotten because it is familiar, and in the latter case the medievalists are ungrateful because they are unconscious. But in order to prove the point, it is not necessary to narrow it either to the aesthetics of one class or the economics of another. The point is sufficiently proved in the plainest, the most popular, the most obvious of all objects of the moment; in the case of Christmas itself.

"Christmas, as it has come down to us, is a typical medieval institution. As a medieval institution it was despised in the day of Scrooge and Grandgrin, and defended with difficulty by the desperate brilliancy of Dickens. As a medieval institution, it preserved ceremonies through an age that disdained ceremony; as a medieval institution. As a medieval institution it was age that deplored indiscriminate and even individual charity.